MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA REVIEW

18 FEBRUARY 1982

Syria

Security Situation -- Citing eyewitnesses, AFP reported that clashes continued between security forces and rebels in Hamah and that tanks and artillery still surrounded the city, which was covered by a heavy pall of smoke from fires and explosions. AFP added that observers in Beirut estimated that the pockets of resistance were weakening and that they would soon be wiped out. AFP also said that, according to eyewitnesses, the violence in Hamah, which began on 2 February, was sparked off when Muslim Brotherhood militants killed a score of local Ba'th Party officials and dragged their bodies through the streets.

Citing information from an unspecified Arab capital, Voice of Lebanon radio reported that about 5,000 men have defected from the Syrian Army during the last week and that an organization, which the radio did not name, has supplied the Muslim Brotherhood with heavy weapons. According to another Voice of Lebanon report, about 2,000 men of the Syrian Arab Deterrent Forces have broken away from their command and joined the Muslim Brotherhood and Fatah. The radio said special Syrian Army units have been posted on the Syrian-Lebanese border to catch smuggled weapons and escaping soldiers. The radio also cited reports that an antiaircraft unit near Hamah airport threatened to fire at Syrian planes if they attacked positions in Hamah.

Support for Al-Asad -- The Soviet ambassador in Damascus reiterated his country's firm support for Syria within the framework of the Syrian-Soviet friendship and cooperation treaty, SANA reported. The ambassador praised Syria's stands under the leadership of President Hafiz al-Asad and stressed that Syria constitutes the peak of all liberation movements in the region and of Arab struggle, SANA added. Meanwhile, Damascus radio reported further cables of support for Al-Asad from provincial popular organizations.

Israel

Sharon Interview -- Defense Minister Ari'el Sharon, in an interview broadcast by Jerusalem television, said Israel will not initiate a war, but a war may be imposed upon it. He claimed Israel has concrete evidence that Syria is preparing for war, despite its current internal situation. These preparations together with a massive "terrorist" buildup in Lebanon require Israel to be fully prepared to stand behind its declarations that it will not allow a return to the situation prevailing on the Lebanese border before July 1981, Sharon maintained. Referring to the cease-fire agreement obtained by U.S. special envoy Philip Habib, Sharon cited an article which says there will be no hostile military activity from Lebanon directed at targets in Israel via land, sea or air, and stressed that this clause is not limited to attacks via the northern border.

Distinguishing between the deep friendship between Israel and the United States and disagreements over issues such as arms supplies, Sharon said he is not reassured by U.S. President Ronald Reagan's message to Prime Minister Menahem Begin and would not be reassured even if Israel were compensated for the sale of advanced weapons to Jordan. Stressing that arms supplies to the Arab states will not bring peace to the region, Sharon asserted that Israel has halted the arms race and will make no further effort to compete with the Arabs over quantities of arms. Sharon then presented his conception of what Israel must do: 1) Without adding a single tank, plane or division, Israel must widen the quality gap between it and its neighbors; 2) Israel must maintain "safety valves," which include never allowing the production of nuclear weapons in Arab states, the change of the Sinai's demilitarized status, or the entry of Iraqi troops into Jordan; 3) Israel must keep the Arab states aware of the credibility of its deterrence. Sharon later illustrated the third point by citing the attack on the Iraqi reactor, which he said came after a warning delivered much earlier. He also said Israel must be prepared to keep its word to respond if its northern settlements are shelled.

West Bank Disturbances -- Jerusalem radio reported violent disturbances by Qalandiyah refugee camp youths in protest against the closure of Bi'r Zayt University.

Jordan

Amman radio reported that AD-DUSTUR described the U.S. administration's recent pledge to maintain Israel's military superiority as a humiliating retreat in the face of an Israeli campaign. Asserting that there are deals on which agreement has already been reached, AD-DUSTUR said Jordan will not stop serious efforts to obtain sophisticated weapons. According to the radio, AR-RA'Y likewise said the U.S. reassurances to Israel do not change Jordan's commitment to ensure the safety of its territory and airspace by all possible means.

Egypt-Oman

According to the joint statement issued by Omani Sultan Qabus ibn Sa'd and Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in the wake of the latter's visit to Oman, the text of which was transmitted by MENA, the two leaders discussed bilateral relations, the current Arab situation and important international issues. Sultan Qabus expressed understanding of and support for Mubarak's efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive Middle East peace, the statement said, while Mubarak emphasized Egypt's support for the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in preserving the security and stability of the area and in developing its capabilities.

Mubarak also praised the Omani Government's wise policy toward the intrigues and plots to which it is exposed. The statement concluded by noting that Qabus accepted Mubarak's invitation to visit Egypt.

Iraq

First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasin Ramadan, in a lengthy interview with the London weekly AD-DUSTUR, said Iraq's military resources are now better than during the first month of the war. The Popular Army is now 400,000 strong, he said, and more than 55,000 of these men are fighting alongside the armed forces at the front. Iraq has overcome its initial difficulties in procuring arms and spare parts and will go on fighting until Iran fully recognizes Iraqi rights, he added. Ramadan said that 60 percent of the 10,000 Arab volunteers on the Iraqi side are Egyptians.

Elsewhere in the interview, Ramadan castigated Syrian President al-Asad for having lost all sense of shame when he sold the Golan Heights, betrayed the cause of Palestine and slaughtered Lebanon's patriots, striking at the Palestinians in alliance with the Phalangists. Ramadan claimed that Al-Asad is supporting Iran and Kurdish rebels led by the Barzani family against Iraq because the Syrian leader knows that an Iraqi victory would bring about his own downfall. Ramadan also indicated that Iraq feels hurt by the lukewarm support it has received from other Arabs, including the Palestinians, for its war with Iran. Asked about Iraq's relations with France, Ramadan denied reports that France has refused to supply Iraq with another nuclear reactor.

Iran

The Kuwaiti paper AS-SIYASAH reported that both President 'Ali Khamene'i and the Iranian ambassador to Kuwait have denied rumors that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni has died. Meanwhile, Tehran radio's Arabic service noted that government spokesman Ahmad Tavakkoli denied rumors that the great ayatollahs will become members of the leadership council, which will be appointed by an experts committee to be elected at the end of April.

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ZIRAY, NUR ATTEND AIR FORCE PARTY CONFERENCE

LD152120 Kabul Domestic Service in Pashto 1530 GMT 15 Feb 82

[Text] A party conference of the political department of the air force and the air defense force opened yesterday at the air force and air defense headquarters. The conference, which is a result of the valuable resolutions of the Seventh PDPA Central Committee Plenum, was attended by Dr Saleh Mohammad Ziray and Nur Ahmad Nur, members of the Politburo and secretaries of the PDPA Central Committee.

The Presidium, the Secretariat, the credentials commission and the secretarial board were elected at the beginning of the meeting. Then diploma engineer Lt Col Dost Mohammad, head of political affairs in the air force and air defense force, presented a compresensive report on the work of party organizations, the combat activities of units and relevant companies, the importance of the PDPA Central Committee plenums and, in particular, the role and importance of the resolutions of the Seventh PDPA Central Committee Plenum. The report was warmly welcomed by the audience.

Subsequently, 11 participants in the conference spoke in affirmation of the basic statement and vowed to make every self-sacrifice by themselves and by their relevant personnel in order to achieve the high aims of the party and government. A resolution was then issued unanimously supporting the resolutions of the Seventh PDPA Central Committee Plenum.

Dr Saleh Mohammad Ziray and Nur Ahmad Nur, in turn, made statements and drew the attention of the audience to their assigned tasks and duties under the present circumstances in the country.

In conclusion, 16 party members were elected as representatives to take part in the PDPA national conference.

KESHTMAND ELECTED DELEGATE TO PDPA CONFERENCE

LD170755 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0417 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Kabul, 16 Feb (BAKHTAR) -- Soltan 'Ali Keshtmand, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee [CC] of the PDPA and chairman of the Council of Ministers of the DRA, was unanimously elected as a delegate to the forthcoming PDPA countrywide conference in a grand meeting held at the headquarters of the chief of general staffs of the Ministry of National Defence of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Nur Ahmad Nur, member of the Politburo and secretary of the PDPA CC, and Dr. Najibollah, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the PDPA, were also present at the meeting.

Among the other speakers, Nur Ahmad Nur delivered a comprehensive speech on the importance of the forthcoming PDPA countrywide conference in further strengthening the combatant party ranks and the significant role of the army in the defence of the revolution.

Lieutenant General Baba Jan, the alternate member of the Central Committee of the PDPA and chief of general staffs, and Lieutenant General 'Abdol Qader, member of the Central Committee of the PDPA and caretaker of the Ministry of the National Defence of the DRA, also spoke on the indefatigable struggles and battles of the armed forces fought towards the elimination of the counter-revolutionary bands and (?deferred the) proceedings of (?the) session to the political maturity and ideological consciousness of the participants of the meeting.

At the end of the conference, Soltan 'Ali Keshtmand expressed his appreciation for the confidence accorded to him by the participants of the meeting to represent them at the forthcoming PDPA countrywide conference.

SULAYMAN LA'EQ LEAVES FOR LIBYAN CONFERENCE

LD171542 Kabul Domestic Service in Pashto 1430 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Excerpts] Sulayman La'eq, member of the PDPA Central Committee and minister of nationalities and tribal affairs, left today for Libya for an official and friendly visit. Sulayman La'eq will attend the international conference on imperialism, Zionism, apartheid and reaction which will be held in Libya, together with high-ranking delegates from the progressive, Arab and other countries of the world.

Raz Mohammad Paktin, member of the PDPA Central Committee and minister of water and power, other party and government authorities and the secretary of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah People's Bureau, bade him farewell at Kabul International Airport.

COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH CUBA

LD171624 Kabul Domestic Service in Pashto 1530 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] A cultural and educational cooperation agreement between the DRA and the Republic of Cuba was signed today in Kabul.

The agreement was signed this morning by the deputy minister of culture of the Ministry of Information and Culture on the Afghan side, and the Cuban ambassador in Kabul for the Republic of Cuba, at the Ministry of Information and Culture. They exchanged the relevant documents.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Information and Culture said that this was the first agreement between the two countries in the field of culture and educational cooperation.

After the signing, the DRA deputy minister of culture and the Cuban ambassador spoke about the friendly links and fraternal relations between the parties and people of both countries. They called the signing of this agreement another valuable step in strengthening the friendly links between the DRA and Cuban Governments.

AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH USSR TO ALTER RIVER COURSES

LD162100 Kabul in Dari and Pashto to Europe 1730 GMT 16 Feb 82

[Text] An agreement was signed today between the DRA Ministry of Water and Power and the Soviet Sel'khozpromeksport to adjust and to build [words indistinct] at the banks of these rivers.

The agreement was signed by the deputy minister of irrigation of the Ministry of Water and Power from the Afghan side and by the deputy economic adviser of the Soviet Embassy in Kabul from the Soviet side. A spokesman for the Ministry of Water and Power said that for nearly half a century seasonal rains have changed the course of these rivers and have inflicted damages on the Afghan side. They have caused damage to asphalt roads, irrigation lands and have demolished the Morecha and Charkhab villages on the Afghan side. They have also threatened the border post.

In order to eliminate the destructiveness of these rivers, four places on the Morghab River and one place on the Koshk River are being altered so as to bring the current of these rivers to their main course. Building strong banks on the rivers and bringing about these alterations will, in addition to protecting irrigational lands from the destruction of seasonal rains, provide a way for making use of nearly 500 jerib [jerib is equal to half an acre] that were previously demolished by the Koshk and Morghab Rivers. The land will be put at the disposal of peasants in this region.

The expenditure on this project will exceed $1,834,640. In accordance with the regulation of border rivers, 50 percent will be paid by the Afghan side and the other 50 percent by the Soviet side. The work of the project is due to begin in the month of April 1982 and will be completed within 8 months.

JASARAT REPORTS AFGHAN MUJAHIDIN SUCCESSES

GF171923 Karachi JASARAT in Urdu 10 Feb 82 p 6

[Text] Peshawar, 9 Feb (PPI/AAP) -- The Afghan mujahidin have cut off the Qonduz-Baghlan highway. In retaliation, the Soviets have heavily bombarded the area.

According to a Jami'at-e Eslami press release, the mujahidin have downed a Soviet helicopter 25 km from the highway and killed the pilot.

On 30 January two children were killed during the Soviet bombardment at (Ghazal Saray).

On 27 January the Soviets bombarded (Jum'a Bazar) village, killing 42 villagers. In their counterattack, the mujahidin destroyed two Soviet tanks and one jeep and killed six Soviet soldiers and eight Parcham faction members.

In a night attack on the famous Kabul fort, Bala Hesar, mujahidin killed 20 Afghan Government soldiers.

In Qandahar Province on 28-29 January there were two skirmishes between the mujahidin and government forces.

On 29 January the mujahidin attacked a military convoy on the Qandahar-Herat road. In this skirmish one government tank and one armored vehicle were destroyed.

MUJAHIDIN, SOVIETS CLASH IN VARDAK PROVINCE

GF180455 Karachi JASARAT in Urdu 12 Feb 82 p 1

[Text] Peshawar, 11 Feb (PPI) -- Several citizens and 95 mujahidin guerrillas have been killed during a bitter skirmish at (Lalarez) in Vardak Province.

According to detailed reports, the mujahidin attacked Soviet and Karmal troops at this point. The Soviet force consisted of 500 soldiers and 100 armored vehicles protected by dozens of Soviet helicopter gunships. The helicopters launched a counterattack against the mujahidin and caused countless casualties.

Later, Soviet bombardment of the villages of Sarcheshmeh, (Siahkhak), (Gala), (Ishlam) and (Gul Khudadad) destroyed 70 percent of the dwellings. Despite the heavy odds, the mujahidin fought valiantly and caused heavy Soviet losses. The Soviet forces used heavy artillery against the mujahidin and laid mines in the area.

In (Madian) Soviet bombardment killed 150 persons.

Along the Kabul-Qandahar highway the Soviets are busy cutting down trees and bushes to prevent mujahidin using them for ambush purposes. In a recent battle, mujahidin destroyed 3 Soviet tanks and 1 armored vehicle and killed 30 Soviet soldiers [no place mentioned].

RAO RETURNS FROM VIETNAM, THAILAND VISIT

BK170257 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] The external affairs minister returned to New Delhi last night after his 5-day visit to Vietnam and Thailand. Talking to newsmen at the airport, Narasimha Rao described his visit as useful.

RAO RECEIVES LETTER FROM HAIG ON CHOWHAN

BK171715 Delhi Domestic Service in English 1530 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] The United States has assured India that it would take action against secessionist leader Jagjit Singh Chowhan if he advocates violent means to challenge the authority of the Government of India.

A letter from Alexander Haig containing the U.S. response to India's concern on the decision to wave the visa requirement to Chowhan was handed over to External Affairs Minister Narasimha Rao by American Ambassador Harry Barnes in New Delhi today.

In the letter the U.S. secretary of state has tried to allay India's apprehensions and said that the United States stands fully for the unity and integrity of India.

NEW ZEALAND CLOSING MISSION IN NEW DELHI

BK171745 Delhi Domestic Service in English 1530 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] A spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry has said that the Government of India is disappointed over New Zealand's decision to close its high commission in New Delhi. A formal intimation from the New Zealand Government has been received by India.

The spokesman said India has had good relations with New Zealand, which is a fellow member of the Commonwealth.

He did not give any categorical reply to the question whether India would take reciprocal action and close its mission in Wellington. However, the spokesman said the level and strength of India's missions are under constant review in the light of the country's foreign policy objectives.

VAJPAYEE, JANATA DELEGATION MEET WITH REDDY

BK171720 Delhi Domestic Service in English 1530 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] A five-member Bharatiya Janata Party delegation today met President Sanjiva Reddy in New Delhi. It was led by party president Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The delegation expressed its apprehension that the basic structure of the Constitution might be changed to introduce a presidental form of government in the country.

AFP REPORTS GANDHI CRITICISM OF INDIAN PRESS

BK141611 Hong Kong AFP in English 1114 GMT 14 Feb 82

[Text] New Delhi, 14 Feb (AFP) -- Prime Minister Indira Gandhi believes that reporting in the Indian press is "absolutely baseless" and the press as a whole is functioning as her opposition.

In an interview with Herman Lindqvist, Asia correspondent of Swedish television, Mrs Gandhi said "it (the Indian press) is not functioning as a free press. It is the opposition in India.... It is not just reporting, their reporting is absolutely baseless."

"That is why the people are not bothered. They (the newspapers) are still supporting other parties, but the people are not supporting those parties," she said, according to excerpts of the interview released here.

In her most critical statement yet against the press, she said that the press had also been against her father, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister.

The Swedish press was also very much against her, she said. "It had written some ghastly things against me. People wrote to me to say sorry and that the press is like that," she added.

GANDHI BRIEFS PARTY ON ECONOMIC SITUATION

BK171725 Delhi Domestic Service in English 1530 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] The prime minister has urged the opposition parties to cooperate with the government on issues vital to the survival of the nation. Mrs Gandhi was addressing the Congress-I Parliamentary Party on the eve of the budget session in New Delhi today. She said pressures are building up within the country and outside and at this juncture there is need for the greatest possible unity.

Briefing newsmen, Secretary of the Congress-I Parliamentary Party K. Lakkappa said Mrs Gandhi made a broad survey of national and international problems and explained the government's efforts to tackle them. The country, she said, has made considerable progress in the economic front and in areas like science and technology.

She particularly referred to the improvement to the infrastructural facilities. These should be fully utilized this year to increase productivity. Workers have to dissuaded from resorting to strikes and halting production. She said many demands of the workers are just but all these cannot be met at the present difficult moment. The government is doing its best to maximize industrial and agricultural production and strengthen the public distribution system to insure that essential commodities and consumer goods reach the people at reasonable prices.

Referring to the opposition's allegation of price rise, Mrs Gandhi said that by merely raising the issue prices will not come down. She stressed the need to make every effort to root out corruption at all levels -- political and administrative.

Expressing her deep concern over the atrocities on the weaker section, Mrs Gandhi called upon her partymen to work for their protection. Some political parties and vested interests are trying to exploit the situation.

Referring to the move of some opposition parties to unite, Mrs Gandhi wondered whether they could fight casteism and communalism in the country.

Mrs Gandhi said she is not against the freedom of the press. She said there is no country in the world which gives so much freedom to the press as in India.

Turning to the international situation, Mrs Gandhi expressed her concern at the growing confrontation as a result of armament race.

Mrs Gandhi also made a reference to the efforts of developing countries to continue the dialogue with the developed nations.

SHAHI REAFFIRMS RESIGNATION FOR HEALTH REASONS

BK171652 Karachi Domestic Service in Urdu 1500 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Foreign Minister Agha Shahi has said: I resigned only on grounds of ill health.

He told a news conference in Islamabad this afternoon that the reports appearing in certain foreign newspapers that I resigned on grounds of foreign policy differences with the president are mischievous and based on ill will.

He said: No foreign minister of the country enjoyed as much confidence and power as I did in formulating and executing foreign policy under the present government.

He said: The question of my differences with the president does not arise because, as the head of the state, he is the fountainhead of all powers and we depend on him for guidance.

Agha Shahi said: The president and the Cabinet have always appreciated and approved the handling of foreign policy. Of late, the Federal Advisory Council also unanimously approved the manner in which I handled the country's foreign policy.

He said: Whether it is a question of establishing new relations with the United States or the problem of Afghanistan, the offer of a no-war pact to India or Pakistan's support for the just cause of the people of Palestine and the condemnation of the Israeli decision to annex the Golan Heights, whether it is a matter of security for the Gulf or the problem of the Middle East, Kampuchea, national independence movements in Africa, or the question of Pakistan's stand on opposition to capitalism and apartheid and so forth, Pakistan's foreign policy has been appreciated on all matters.

The foreign minister said: I have always enjoyed the president's confidence and on the basis of doctors' reports about my health, it is impossible for me to continue my responsibilities.

In reply to a question, he said: As a patriotic citizen, my services will always remain dedicated to the nation and whenever need for my counsel is felt on any issue, I shall be pleased to serve the nation.

Agha Shahi thanked his colleagues in the Foreign Office and the newspapers who extended full support to him in the discharge of his responsibilities.

UN TEAM COMPLETES CHEMICAL WEAPONS INVESTIGATION

BK181023 Karachi Domestic Service in English 1005 GMT 18 Feb 82

[Text] The UN team of experts today completed its investigation in Peshawar into the alleged use of chemical weapons against the Afghan people.

Talking to the ASSOCIATED PRESS OF PAKISTAN, the leader of the team said that it would take them quite some time to study and analyze the evidence collected on the matter. He said the team would submit its report to the UN secretary general for placing it before the General Assembly.

SRI LANKA

ROK'S NO MEETS WITH JAYEWARDENE, HAMEED

BK161154 Colombo International Service in English 1045 GMT 16 Feb 82

[Text] Visiting South Korean Foreign Minister No Sin-yong called on President Jayewardene this morning. Earlier, he met his Sri Lankan counterpart A.C.S. Hameed and began talks on the international situation, including developments in Northeast Asia.

The visiting minister congratulated Sri Lanka on the tremendous economic progress achieved by the government during the last 4 years.

Hameed said that the government had sufficient reason to be proud of the country's achievements in the past few years. He stressed that the main interest of the government was to see that all these achievements in the economic field were translated into tangible improvement in the day-to-day life of the people.

Tomorrow, No is scheduled to visit the site of the building under construction by a South Korean firm. He will then visit the free trade zone in Katunayaka to inspect a footwear factory, which is the joint venture between Sri Lanka and South Korea.

No leaves for India tomorrow on the next leg of his tour, which will take him to France and Nigeria.

Continues Visit

BK171205 Colombo International Service in English 1045 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea No Sin-yong has said that since the establishment of diplomatic relations the ties between Sri Lanka and South Korea have expanded to a considerable extent. Trade has increased almost eightfold in 4 years.

Addressing a news conference in Colombo yesterday, No said that although the trade balance was in favor of his country, Korea would try to open up its market for more goods from Sri Lanka. This will enable Sri Lanka to have a more favorable trade balance with Korea in the future.

Exchange of agricultural, marine and industrial personnel and technology were also increasing at a rapid rate.

According to Foreign Ministry sources, No briefed [Sri Lankan Foreign Minister] Hameed on the initiatives taken by South Korea to resume a dialogue with Pyongyang on the reunification of the two Koreas. The visiting minister expressed the hope that Sri Lanka, as a prominent nonaligned country, would lend her weight in support of the peaceful reunification.

ARMED FORCES PUT ON ALERT FOLLOWING SHOOTING

BK150626 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 15 Feb 82

[Text] In northern Sri Lanka, armed forces have been put on the alert. Official sources said this has been done following several shooting incidents in the area yesterday. One army officer was killed and three others were seriously injured in the incident. Jaffna and its suburbs were tense. This followed a combing operation by armed forces to track the persons responsible for the shooting incidents.

SPOKESMAN DENIES CLERGY TO BE ON COUNCIL

GF171518 Tehran International Service in Arabic 1430 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Government Spokesman Ahmad Tavakkoli has denied rumors that the great ayatollahs will become members of the leadership council. He said that the experts committee which will appoint the council has not yet been elected.

Mr Tavakkoli announced in a press and radio interview that the election of members of the experts committee will take place at the end of April.

He stressed that this committee will elect the members of the leadership council according to the Constitution and that the election of leadership council members does not mean that they will assume the responsibilities of leadership.

KHOMEYNI NAMES MA'ADIKHAH PROPAGANDA COORDINATOR

GF180702 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 0530 GMT 18 Feb 82

[Text of decree issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni on 17 February]

[Text] In His exalted name. Respected Hojjat ol-Eslam Mr Ma'adikhah, honorable minister of Islamic guidance: With gratitude to you and all the groups and individuals who worked on the celebration of the anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Our foreign propaganda, in view of all the venomous publicity against Islam and the Islamic revolution, is of special importance. In order to coordinate, revitalize and make our foreign propaganda more (?effective), I hereby appoint Your Excellency coordinator of foreign propaganda so that, with the blessings of Almighty God and cooperation of all individuals, foundations and organizations involved in this field, you will continue this vital mission and prevent disorderliness and (?aberrations). Thus, the dissemination of poison and false propaganda by rumormongering bodies about the Islamic Republic will be arrested as much as possible and you will present the Islamic Republic and its ideals and motives in all their inherent (?splendor).

I pray to Almighty God for you and all blessings be upon you.

[Signed] Ruhollah Musavi-Khomeyni, night of 17 February 1982

VELAYATI DENIES ALGERIA ASKED TO MEDIATE WAR

NC171536 Paris AFP in English 1527 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Algiers, 17 Feb (AFP) — Iran has not asked Algeria to mediate in its war with Iraq, Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati said here last night at the end of an official visit to Algiers.

Mr Velayati told a press conference that Iran's conditions for ending the long-running war had not changed since the beginning: Iraqi troops must leave Iranian territory and pay reparations, [words indistinct] international organisation or "brother country" decided which state was the aggressor.

He also denied reports that Israel had supplied military equipment to Iran. "Our relations with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) are very good, and we say the Palestinian people must be helped politically and militarily," he said.

He added that Israel only understood the language of force, and Iran rejected all peaceful solutions to the Middle East conflict "which are only intended to perpetuate Israel's domination over the Palestinian people."

Mr Velayati confirmed that Iran had demanded that the non-aligned conference scheduled this year for Baghdad be held in another country. Iraq no longer qualified to be a non-aligned state, he said.

Mr Velayati said his visit was aimed at strengthening relations between two "progressive countries." His talks with Algerian leaders had covered commercial, cultural and industrial exchanges, he said.

IRAQ EVADING ACTION ON POWS' FAMILIES

LD172246 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Excerpt] In answer to a suggestion by the Islamic Republic of Iran inviting the families of Iraqi POWs to come to Iran to meet the prisoners, the Iraqi Ba'thist regime confined itself to an announcement on its state radio to the effect that Iraq, too, was ready to carry out a similar measure.

Following their suggestion the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran pursued the issue through the International Red Cross and called for preparations for the right conditions and for the territory of an intermediary to be specified so these steps could be taken. However, the Iraqi Ba'thist regime did not give a candid and clear-cut answer to any letters from the Islamic Republic of Iran and thereby in effect evaded an active response to this humanitarian suggestion by the Islamic Republic of Iran. So far it has not carried out any positive and serious step, so much so that the Islamic Republic has declared to the International Red Cross its readiness unilaterally to receive the families of Iraqi POWs.

Political quarters consider the Saddam regime's cold response as stemming from the Iraqi Ba'thist Government's fear lest the Iraqi Muslim people acquaint themselves with the achievements of Iran's Islamic revolution. Taking into account the fact that there are more than 7,000 Iraqi POWs in Iran and that Iran has expressed its readiness to receive 4 persons from each family, 28,000 persons from the Iraqi Muslim people would acquaint themselves with the positions of the Islamic Republic. The same political quarters consider their subsequent return to Iraq, armed with their knowledge of these achievements, would constitute a danger to the future of the Saddam regime and would have an effect on the growth of Iraq's Islamic movement. This has caused the Saddam regime to act passively and with complete caution toward this issue.

RAFSANJANI PAYS VISIT TO SOUTHERN FRONTS

LD172008 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] According to a Central News Unit report, Mr Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the imam's representative on the Supreme Defense Council, after a 2-day visit to the southern fronts, the cities of Bostan and Abadan and Khuzestan's various areas, this afternoon left Ahvaz for Tehran.

The speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, together with the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and several of the corps' commanders, at 0630 yesterday arrived in Bostan and, while visiting the city's various areas, was gloriously welcomed by the people and the combatants based in this city.

Mr Hashemi-Rafsanjani, in a speech delivered to a gathering of the combatants at the Guards Corps headquarters in Bostan, reminded the audience of the historic role of this ideological battle and said: Every moment you are spending on these fronts will be registered in your record of actions with the Almighty and your very sacred presence will make the history of the future generations of Islam.

Then Mr Hashemi and his entourage visited an artillery unit and the commander of the unit made some explanations about the functions of his unit to the imam's representative on the Supreme Defense Council. Then the visitors went to the Sableh bridge and witnessed first hand the burned tanks of the army of blasphemy, which are the symbols of the historic defeat of the enemy's counteroffensive. Then one of the enemy's minefields, captured in the course of the Jerusalem Path offensive, was visited.

At a meeting during this visit, the military commanders submitted a report on the situation at the fronts and details related to foiling the enemy's offensive in Chazzabeh and Meysan to the imam's representative on the Supreme Defense Council.

Then the soldiers, NCO's and officers held the noon and afternoon prayers at a military base, led by Hojjat ol-Eslam Hashemi-Rafsanjani. After the prayers, Mr Hashemi-Rafsanjani, in a speech, expressed appreciation for the self-sacrifices and devotion of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Mobilization forces.

Continuing his visit to the south, the speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, together with his military entourage and Mr Tavalla'i, the managing director of the southern oilfields, visited the Karun agroindustrial project and was warmly welcomed by the workers. Some of the officials there discussed their problems with him.

Then Mr Hashemi-Rafsanjani, in a gathering of this factory's workers, thanked them for their warm welcome and said: This interest and enthusiasm shown by you is for Islam. Continuing his speech, he addressed the audience: You are the economic soldiers of this Islamic country; protect your trenches because the value of your struggles is not less than that of the combatants in the trenches.

Then the speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and his entourage visited various parts of the aforesaid project.

Continuing his visit to the southern war zones, the speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly also visited the Shush front and issued some guidance to the officials of the revolutionary institutions and government offices regarding economic activities.

This evening he visited the Abadan front and the areas liberated following the lifting of the Abadan siege and talked with the front's combatants.

ARMED FORCES JOINT STAFF COMMUNIQUE 793

LD171900 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Communique 793 of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran]

[Text] In His exalted name. The outcome of the battle waged by the combatants of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the acts of self-sacrifice they carried out and the situation on the war fronts is hereby brought to the attention of the dear compatriots:

During yesterday's exchange of fire on the country's western fronts -- which took place mainly on the Sar-e Pol-e Zahab, Gilan-e Gharb, Sumar, Meymak and Salehabad fronts and on the positions of the irregular tribal forces -- the ground forces' combatants on the Gilan-e Gharb front opened fire on the Saddamists' positions and destroyed more than 11 enemy weapons emplacements, some observation posts and 1 truck.

On other western fronts, the ground forces succeeded in setting on fire some 16 trenches with their servicemen and 1 of the enemy's ammunition huts. They also destroyed three enemy tanks.

In an engagement on the Malekshahi front, the gendarmerie combatants wounded nine Iraqi servicemen and killed a number of others.

Exchanges of fire continued sporadically yesterday on the front west of Dezful. While defending their positions and silencing enemy fire, our ground forces' combatants on that front disrupted the enemy's organization with surprise attacks and harrassing operations. In some of these operations, a number of Iraqi servicemen were killed and some light weapons and ammunition were captured. Sporadic exchanges of artillery and heavy-weapon fire continued on other southern fronts. The exchanges were of greatest intensity on the Bostan front.

On the Susangerd front, the gendarmerie combatants opened retaliatory fire on enemy positions, destroying one Iraqi jeep and killing three servicemen. Telling blows were also delivered to the Iraqi forces' positions on the Abadan front and on installations in Al-Faw [in Iraq]. A number of servicemen from the aggressive Iraqi Army were either killed or wounded.

Various parts of the city of Abadan were the targets of the enemy's heavy-weapon fire yesterday. A number of citizens were wounded.

During the battle on 14 and 15 February, seven of our fellow fighters from the ground forces and one of our gendarmerie combatants joined the rank of martyrs. They sacrificed their pure lives for the greatness and pride of dear Islam and the beloved homeland. May their souls be happy and their path enduring!

IRAQI AIRCRAFT BOMB ESLAMABAD-E GHARB CIVILIANS

LD171742 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Excerpt] A Central News Unit correspondent reports from Bakhtaran that following the continuous and shameful defeats of the forces of the aggressive Iraqi regime by the combatants of Islam in the south and west of our country, two aggressive Iraqi aircraft today raided the resisting and martyr-nurturing city of Eslamabad-e Gharb and dropped their bombs on the defenseless people of this city. We draw your attention to this dispatch:

Baghdad's shaky regime today once again showed its inhumane and savage nature by bombing the residential and civilian areas of Eslamabad-e Gharb.

At 1435 today the mercenary pilots of the American regime of Saddam bombed the poor districts of the city of Eslamabad-e Gharb from French-made Mirage aircraft and with the support of the United States.

In this savage and wild attack, more than 20 of the heirs to the blood of [Imam] Hoseyn -- may peace be upon him -- were martyred and 30 others wounded. The wounded were immediately taken to hospitals in Eslamabad-e Gharb for treatment.

TEHRAN REPORTS CLASHES WITHIN IRAQI ARMED FORCES

LD171920 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] IRNA, quoting reliable and informed sources, has reported: In the course of a clash in the northwest of Bostan, which took place after the recent battle in Tang-e Chazzabeh, 60 Iraqi military men supporting the Islamic revolution mujahidin, who served in the Iraq Army as reservists, staged an armed uprising against the military men supporting Saddam's pro-American regime.

As a result, 100 Saddamist aggressors were killed. In this clash 40 of the supporters of the Islamic revolution mujahidin were martyred but the rest did not suffer any casualties.

Meanwhile, in the past few days 120 Iraqi soldiers, who could not stand up to the forces of Islam in Tang-e Chazzabeh and intended to surrender to the forces of Islam, were fired on by the Saddamist mercenaries from the rear and were killed.

'NATIONALIST' FORCES KILL GUARDS IN HAJIABAD

NC171454 (Clandestine) Voice of Iran in Persian 1805 GMT 16 Feb 82

[Text] A Voice of Iran correspondent has reported that members of the Sarbedaran [extreme nationalist organization in Caspian region] group attacked (?a number) of the regime's revolution guards in Hajiabad village, in the northwestern area of our country, and killed 22. According to the same report, the nationalist Sarbedaran forces returned to their (?bases) after this act without suffering any losses.

The nationalist Sarbedaran forces carried out their first heroic act with the (?successful operation) in Amol, displaying their strength in the combat arena.

Continuing, the Voice of Iran correspondent recalled that the combatant Sarbedaran organization is made up of a group of officers and NCO's of the Iranian Army and of other combatant groups of our country that consider the Iranian identity the loftiest of principles and strongly oppose any type of foreign (?existence). These patriots consider the regime ruling Iran an anti-Iranian system and a foreign puppet.

An important point is that Khomeyni's regime has so far not claimed to have arrested even one of these combatants, either wounded or not. This is because the Sarbedaran forces, which are dispersed throughout Mazandaran Gilan and Azarbayjan, are able to return to their forest bases after carrying out their victorious operations.

TAVAKKOLI QUESTIONED ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

LD171150 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1030 GMT 17 Feb 82

[Text] Ahmad Tavakkoli, minister of labour and social affairs and government spokesman, in a press, radio and television conference this morning, answered questions from reporters about various issues. During this press conference, the government spokesman referred to the Defense Ministry's industrial activities and the successes achieved in that field. He said: The efforts of our brothers in that industrial sector have been outstanding, and have brought us close to self-sufficiency in some cases.

In reply to a question by a Central News Unit correspondent concerning small industries and government help to that sector of the industry, he said: In that sector of the industry, the craftsmen are faced with a lack of raw materials, the problems of manufacturing permits and the high level of the employers' share of employee insurance. But, with the implementation of the prepared plan, these workshops will be identified and the government will give them sufficient raw materials for one year; during that period, they will have the chance to achieve the set standards. Then, they will be given official permit. He added: This plan will be implemented in such a way that, if a workshop fires one of its workers, then its share of government-supplied raw materials will be reduced. This is in order to (?fully engage) the workshop.

The government spokesman added: As for insurance, we have allocated 3 billion rials from next year's budget in that area. In accordance with a bill to be presented to the Majlis, the fine for late payment of insurance contributions will be reduced, and collecting of the revenue will be in such a way that it will not hurt the craftsmen.

Concerning insurance problems, Mr Tavakkoli said: A bill is to be presented to the Majlis to amend the insurance act.

Concerning the increase in prices and also the unreasonable prices of some goods, such as automobiles, he said: These problems have arisen because of disproportion in the amount of cash in circulation and the supply of goods, which has become disproportionate for various reasons. There are two ways to solve this: to increase domestic production or to increase imports. Naturally, we are striving to increase production. We will not allow luxury goods such as automobiles to change hands so that money is spent on circulation of goods and not on production.

EDUCATION MINISTER RETURNS FROM DPRK, PRC

LD151136 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1030 GMT 15 Feb 82

[Excerpt] The Central News Unit reports that Mr 'Ali Akbar Parvaresh, minister of education and training, who led a delegation to the DPRK, returned to Tehran last night. The minister of education and training had a meeting with Mr Kim Il-song, preisdent of the DPRK, at which they discussed expansion of relations between the two countries, current world issues and other matters of mutual interest.

Mr 'Ali Akbar Parvaresh visited several educational centers in the DPRK and had talks with educational officials on technical and professional training.

The minister of education and training and those accompanying him paid an unofficial visit to the PRC, had talks with that country's minister of education and inspected several educational institutions.

CLANDESTINE ON COOPERATION WITH SOVIET UNION

GF151732 (Clandestine) Free Voice of Iran in Persian to Iran 1500 GMT 14 Feb 82

[Text] Relations between the Tehran regime and the Soviet Union are rapidly expanding. According to our reporter in Esfahan, the Russians are working very quickly to complete the second foundry in Esfahan's steel mill in order to increase Iran's iron production. Hoseyn Musavi-Khamene'i, the prime minister of the regime, stated in a Cabinet session yesterday that when the second foundry in the Esfahan steel mill is operational the production of the mill will reach 2 million tons per year.

The Russians are presently constructing two power stations in Iran. The energy minister of Khomeyni's regime his meetings in Moscow reviewed the subject of exporting Iranian natural gas to the Soviet Union.

We recall that the regime's authorities, aided by the Tudeh Party, recently sent a number of workers from the Esfahan steel mill to Moscow for necessary technical training. Our correspondent adds that around 20 workers from the Esfahan steel mill are presently in Moscow. The workers being trained in Moscow seem to be members of Islamic societies.

AHVAZ REPORTS NEW OIL WELL DRILLED IN KHUZESTAN

GF161734 Ahvaz Domestic Service in Persian 1330 GMT 15 Feb 82

[Excerpt] Employees and engineers of the Iranian national drilling company, affiliated to the Oil Ministry, have been able to drill an oil well following the discovery of an oil region in Khuzestan. The well became operational yesterday on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The operation was carried out despite the war imposed by the U.S. mercenaries -- the Iraqis -- against our Islamic country and the problem it has created. The operation was carried out to free Iran from the economic yoke of the criminal United States and for the sake of complete Iranian self-sufficiency.